

THE OBJECT OF THINKING

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1. The artwork implies an "antithetical critical element"¹⁹ that allows it to reflect its conditions.
2. It must not exhaust itself in such reflection, however, since it includes, like any positing, assertion of form and decision, an element of profective blindness, an element evading its self-understanding and its self-reassuring.
3. A minimum of blindness, a minimum of tendentiousness and interest, a minimum of uncontrollability and violence is still part of the most careful analysis.
4. If it denies that, it is naive and offers itself as such as an object of analysis that convicts it of an implicit blindness.
5. Now art does not have much to do with mistrust, conviction, and police zeal. Its critical power correlates with an affirmation resembling an ontological consent.
6. Obviously, both elements cross over in the artwork: consent and not being in agreement, affirmation and negativity.
7. The political aspect of art lies in turning equally to both elements, on the one hand, refusing to neutralize its critical power in a merely blind affirmation, in order, on the other hand, to keep the certainty alive within it that there can be no art that could, or even should, get rid of its blindness, since it marks the work's opening to something unknown and new.
8. That is what distinguishes it from journalism—this opening to its blindness as a productive power.
9. Blindness, ambivalence, and truth mark the status of incommensurability of a world that has begun to believe in itself as if in a fact.
10. There is only one world; there is no second world, no world behind this one, no utopian place.
11. But this one world without an exit is in no way identical with the intelligence it supplies about itself in the form of images, language, information.
12. Rather, it has an incommensurability that withdraws from any direct appearance.
13. It denotes nothing other than the inconsistency of the universe of consistency that we call reality.

14. The affirmative trait of the artwork sews it to this incommensurability, which inscribes itself as a resistance in every religiosity of the facts.
15. The alertness and care of art, its political nature, become visible in its resistance against the temptation to turn itself into journalism, in its resistance against the power of facts, on the one hand, and against the aesthetic, always idealist mistaking of itself in the phantasma of pure art, on the other.
16. Art exists only in the sphere of economic, cultural, social, and political overdetermination.
17. Here it must articulate its distance from everything that limits its claim to autonomy.
18. As an affirmation of difference, art affirms the hyperbolism characterizing it, which obliges it to respect the incommensurable rather than facts that misrecognize their fictitious status.
19. In the eighty-second aphorism in *Minima Moralia*, Adorno describes the opening of thinking to the inconsistency of facts: „While thought relates to facts and moves by criticizing them, its movement depends no less on the maintenance of distance. It expresses exactly what is, precisely because what is is never quite as thought expresses it. Essential to it is an element of exaggeration, of over-shooting the object, of self-detachment from the weight of the factual, so that instead of merely reproducing being it can, at once rigorous and free, determine it. Thus every thought resembles play, with which Hegel no less than Nietzsche compared the work of the mind. The unbarbaric side of philosophy is its tacit awareness of the element of irresponsibility, of blitheness springing from the volatility of thought, which forever escapes what it judges. Such licence is resented by the positivistic spirit and put down to mental disorder. Divergence from the facts becomes mere wrongness, the moment of play a luxury in a world where the intellectual functions have to account for their every moment with a stop-watch. But as soon as thought repudiates its inviolable distance and tries with a thousand subtle arguments to prove its literal correctness, it founders. If it leaves behind the medium of virtuality, of anticipation that cannot be wholly fulfilled by any single piece of actuality; in short, if instead of interpretation it seeks to become mere statement, everything it states becomes, in fact, untrue. Its apologetics, inspired by uncertainty and a bad conscience, can be refuted at every step by demonstrating the non-identity which it will not acknowledge, yet which alone makes it thought. If, on the other hand, it tried to claim its distance as a privilege, it would act no better, but would proclaim two kinds of truth, that of the facts and that of ideas. That would be to decompose truth itself, and truly to denigrate thought. Distance is not a safety-zone but a field of tension.“²⁰
20. Positivism, which is devoted to the facts like proven certainties, understands nothing as long as it reduces thinking (as well as art) to a sequence of certain steps, robbing it of its fantasy.
21. It could almost be said that there is no thinking that is not art, if art implies the excess, the surpassing and transgressing of the authority of facts.
22. The artistic character of thinking would mark its relatedness to a practice of articulation of the self in the world that pronounces the imperative of literalness in order to provoke a disturbance in the midst of established, correct facts by inventing new (aesthetic) forms and new concepts.

23. The distance from what is correct and well known, from the factual and the firmly existing, is the element in which art and philosophy come to themselves, without relying on arriving punctually.